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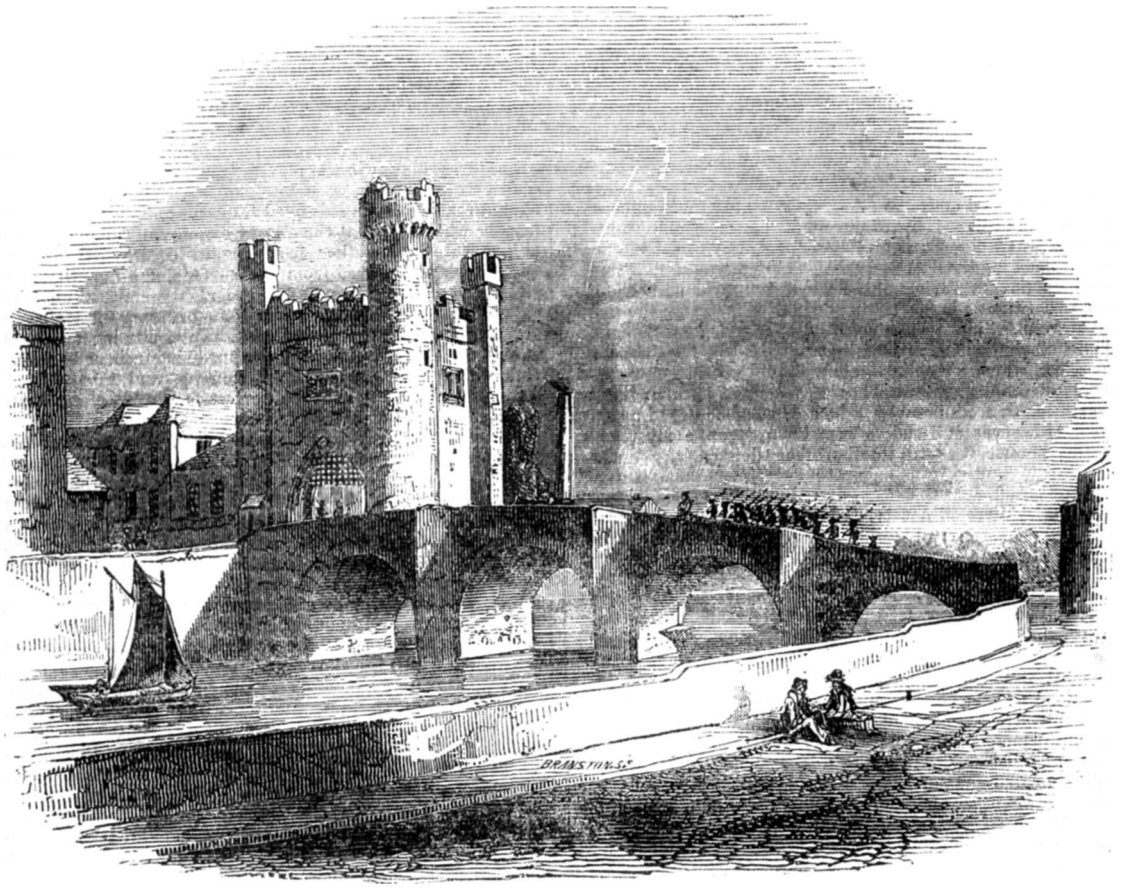

BARRACK BRIDGE AND THE MILITARY GATE, DUBLIN.

THOUGH our own good metropolis is confessedly one of the most ancient cities in the empire, yet there are few towns of any importance either in England, Scotland, or Ireland, that have so little appearance of old age; we have indeed a couple of venerable cathedrals, which is more, we believe, than any other city in her Majesty's dominions, except London, can boast of; and we have a few insignificant remains of monastic edifices, but hid in obscure situations, where they are only known to zealous antiquaries:—with the exception of these, however, we have nothing that has not a modern look, though too often a tattered one; nor is there, we believe, a single house within our Circular Road that has seen two hundred years. Our bridges and other public edifices in like manner are all modern—specimens of mushroom architectural aristocracy—very dignified and imposing, no doubt, in their aspect, but without any hallowing associations connected with remote times to make us respect them.

It is owing, perhaps, to these circumstances that we have always had a pleasure in seeing the old-looking bridge and gateway which form the subject of our prefixed illustration—we say old-looking, for in reality neither is very old; but they have an antique appearance about them which prevents us from thinking our city a mere creation of yesterday. They are very picturesque also, and contrast well with the other bridge scenes along our quays, which, though more splendid and architectural, are as yet too new-looking and commonplace.

Though Barrack Bridge, or, as it is more popularly called, Bloody Bridge, is now the oldest of the eight bridges which span the Liffey within our city, its antiquity is no earlier than the close of the seventeenth century; and yet this very bridge is the second structure of the kind erected in Dublin, as previously to its construction there was but one bridge—*the* Bridge, as it was called, connecting Bridge-street with Church-street—across the Liffey. And this fact is alone sufficient to prove the advance in prosperity and the arts of civilised life which Dublin has made within a period of little more than a century.

Barrack Bridge was originally constructed of wood, and was erected in 1670; and its popular name of Bloody Bridge

was derived, as Harris the historian states, from the following circumstance, which occurred in the year after. The apprentices of Dublin having assembled themselves riotously together with an intention to break down the bridge, it became necessary to call out the military to defeat their object, when twenty of the rioters were seized, and committed to the Castle. It happened, however, afterwards, that as a guard of soldiers were conveying these young men to the Bridewell, they were rescued by their fellows, and in the fray four of them were slain; "from which accident it took the name of Bloody Bridge." In a short time afterwards, this wooden structure gave place to the stone bridge we now see, which is of unadorned character, and consists of four semicircular arches. Its rude and antique appearance, however, harmonizes well with the military gateway placed at its south-western extremity, on the road leading to the Royal Hospital at Kilmainham. This gateway, which was designed by the late eminent architect, Francis Johnston, Esq. P.R.H.A., and erected for government, under his superintendence, in 1811, consists of a square tower, having smaller square towers projecting from three of its angles, and a circular one of greater diameter and altitude at its fourth or north-eastern angle. The object for which this gateway tower was erected, as well as the period of its erection, is indicated by escutcheons on its east and west sides, bearing the arms of the Duke of Richmond and the Earl of Harrington, the lord-lieutenant and the commander of the forces of the time. A similar shield on its north side facing the river, sculptured with the armorial bearings of the family of Johnston, indicates the name of its architect; and it is worthy of mention as a characteristic of the love for posthumous fame of Mr Johnston, that this tablet was not known to exist till within a few years back, and after he had himself paid the debt of nature; having been concealed from view by a box of wood fastened against it, and which was suffered to remain—a strange mystery to the curious observer—till it fell off from decay. P.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDING TO THE QUALITIES OF SEED,

AND THE CONDITION OF THE SOIL IN THE SOWING SEASON.

BY MARTIN DOYLE.

Among the common Irish farmers, indifference to the quality of all seeds is still remarkable. Even in respect to wheat, that most valuable grain, stupidity and carelessness are observable, though the loss sustained in consequence, both in the quantity and quality of the produce, is very great. It is no doubt principally owing to the superiority of climate that wheat and other corn crops grown in the midland counties of England are so far superior to our grain productions; but much of the excellence which we perceive is attributable to the care taken in changing seed, and using that only which is really good. An English farmer will send his waggon a considerable distance for the seed which will best answer for his land, and he is willing to pay an advanced price for it, as he knows that his advantage will be proportional.

We do not import from the principal wheat counties of England a sufficient quantity of seed: degeneracy rapidly takes place in the quality of that which we do sow of imported grain, and on that account a regular and frequent change is necessary, and by the more economical distribution of this, the difference between the prices of home-grown and imported seed would be scarcely felt. Not that I would recommend, except in some of our most calcareous inland counties, those *white* varieties which flourish in Kent, or Suffolk, or Buckinghamshire, but the hardier red Lammas kinds which succeed with us in general, but which require frequent renewal, else they become thick skinned and dark coloured, and consequently of inferior value to the miller. By substituting the drill system for the broad-cast in fit seasons, and on land perfectly suited to it, one part in four, certainly one in five, is saved, even by those who sow in the narrowest possible drills, and thickly.

I shall detail the mode by which the land is prepared for sowing, and the process of sowing, in Buckinghamshire, on clover ley, the most troublesome for the purpose:—

Farm-yard manure being spread upon the surface, wheel ploughs drawn by three powerful horses are set to work to plough the land in the usual British way. In wide lands or stitches, after the sod has been turned and laid at an angle of forty-five degrees, the seed is sometimes then sown and harrowed down. But the neatest farmers, instead of sowing at this stage of the work, employ a compressing implement formed of two parallel metal wheels at one end of an axle, and very close to each other, and a guide wheel of the same diameter at the other end. The interior rims of the compressing wheels (or rollers) are four inches wide, and nearly touch each other; the exterior surfaces are narrowed to two inches; these wheels sink into the earth at the junctions of the furrow slices, and by pressing down the grassy edges, and forming perfect grooves at the intervals of seven or nine inches, the seed may be sown with extreme exactness, and without the loss of a single grain, and at a uniform depth. But though the seed is frequently sown with the preparation just stated, the practice of the neatest and most judicious farmers is to harrow down these drills after the rollers have formed and completed them, and then to sow with the Suffolk drill-machine in the free and pulverized surface. This implement forms and sows several shallow drills at each bouting, and with perfect precision; the experienced eye of the man who follows in the rear, enabling him in an instant to perceive any possible irregularity in the movement of the hoppers and distribution of the seed.

The great advantage derived from the action of these compressing wheels is, that the grassy edges of the furrow slices are prevented altogether from vegetating by the depth to which they are removed from the surface, and that the pressure of the portions into which the rollers sink, is far more effective and consolidating than if an ordinary broad roller were to pass over the entire area. In preparing any loose fallow land for vetches, these compressing rollers are very serviceable. By following two ploughs, and in the same tracks, the ploughing and the perfect formation of the drills by pressure are accomplished in the same space of time, the two wheels obviously describing double the number of furrows described by each plough in the same period.

In heavy clay soils this compression is at least unnecessary, and in stony land drilling is difficult and unadvisable, but in light open soils the advantages of this system are considerable. The proper season for sowing is also a point of great consideration, both as regards the economy of seed of any kind, and the productiveness of the crop.

Some people labour to effect their seed-sowing on a particular day or week without other calculations, and are quite satisfied that all is well if the seed is in the ground at the precise time which they have appointed for the purpose. Now, any rule as to *time* alone is especially absurd in our variable climate; even in the midland counties of England, where extreme vicissitudes of weather are less frequent, it is injudicious to fix any certain rule as to the exact time for committing the various sorts of corn to the ground. Experience has taught those who have considered the subject, that it is unwise to *force a season*. For example, the middle of October is considered in Buckinghamshire to be the best time for sowing wheat; but the earth at that time may be so dry (and actually was so in the past year) as to be more fit for barley than wheat; or it may then be so wet as to be equally unfit for the reception of the seed. In either case the judicious farmer waits for the correct season, which experience has taught will have a corresponding harvest.

After a wet cold summer the light dry soils of that county being firm and consolidated, it is perhaps desirable to sow wheat at a very early period of the autumn; and after a hot dry summer, when the land is in a contrary condition, it would be better to wait for the autumnal rains to obtain a firm seed bed. Again, with barley on the same soil, the first of April is considered a good time; but the farmer who should persist in sowing just then in spite of the weather or the unprepared state of the land, would be a fool indeed, and would discover the effect of his blunder in the shortness of his crop. It is true that the superstitions of the ancients which so ridiculously influenced the affairs of husbandry, have long since ceased to be regarded. No one in these days would think it expedient to steep his seed in the juice of wild cucumbers; nor to bring it into contact with the horns of an ox, for luck; nor to cover the seed basket with the skin of a hyæna, to keep off by its odour the attacks of vermin; nor to sprinkle corn before sowing with water in which stags' horns or crabs had been immersed; nor to mix powdered cypress leaves through the seed—though pickles and solutions for destroying insects are not to be despised. Neither are the planetary influences now much respected; yet there are